(a) what are the names of the timber mafia who despatched 177 wagons of timber from North-East and for whom;

(b) whether such persons have not been arrested as yet and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether the multi-disciplinary team to probe into the matter has since been constituted and if so, the details thereof and by when the probe is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) For identification of persons involved in illegal fellings, conservation and transportation of timber etc. the process of verification of documents such as transit passes, railway receipts, original documents maintained by the State Governments etc. have been undertaken, which has not been completed so far.

(c) A Special Investigation Team comprising of four members has been constituted by this Ministry for detailed investigations. Steps have been taken to expedite the investigation by the Special Investigation Team.

Cutting of Logs for Village Festival

5058. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY:
SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether 50,000 logs were cut during the first week of March, 2000 near Bangalore for village festival;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action proposed to enlighten the locals of the area about harmful effects on ecology by observing such rituals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) to (c) As per information received from the State Government of Karnataka, about 4000 to 5000 branches from trees were cut in surrounding village for village festival ritual at Sargoor village of Channapatha taluk in Bangalore Rural District on 28.2.2000. However, no trees have been felled from the forest areas. This is for an old ritual where the villagers of the nearby villages assemble at Sargoor village infront of Basaveshwara temple. The festival is called "KONDA HABBA".

There is a belief among villagers that if the logs and branches of the unyielding tamarind trees are offered to sacred fire in front of temple, the trees will yield good crop next year. Hence, villagers offer branches of trees to the sacred fire. Normally, not more than one piece is carried by each person participating in the festival. This is being practiced on a very small scale where people carry branches and woodpieces from their own houses to use in the sacred fire in front of the temple, the quantity of which is insignificant. Due to the extension work undertaken by the Forest Department, the practice is getting discontinued slowly and now the ritual is only symbolic. The State Forest department has made efforts to generate awareness about the importance of trees in maintaining ecological balance

Noise Pollution

†5059. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the Survey report of World Health Organisation stating that half of the population of Chennai, Calcutta, Mumbai and Delhi may go deaf if the present level of noise pollution in these metros increases by five decibel;

(b) if so, the targets set to save environment from the looming threat to human life and nature in other small and big cities, including metros, affected by noise pollution; and

(c) the reasons for one decibel increase in the level of noise pollution every year and the details of efforts being made by Government to check the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) According to the World Health Organization, no such study has been made.

(b) and (c) The Government have taken various measures to regulate and control noise pollution, which include the following:—

(i) Noise pollution has been included in the air (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act. Ambient standards in respect of noise for different categories of areas (residential, commercial, industrial and silence zones) have been notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

(ii) Noise limits have also been prescribed for automobiles, domestic appliances and construction equipment at the manufacturing stage.

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.